

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget**

**March 6, 2015**

**Erika McCarthy, Norwalk, CT**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Erika McCarthy and I would like to testify on the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget. I am opposed to the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. In particular, I urge you to reconsider cuts in funding to the Regional Mental Health Board (RMHB) system.

I write this testimony as a taxpayer, as a registered voter, as a person with loved ones who suffer with mental health issues, as a young adult, and as a former state grant-funded employee of the SWRMHB who was fortunate enough to see the incredible benefit of the RMHB system from the inside.

The RMHB system is a critical component of the state's mental health system and provides a voice in the mental health dialogue to consumers and providers in each of our state's local communities. The RMHBs provide numerous benefits to their regions and the state overall, including evaluating DHMAS funded behavioral health services, assessing regional needs for mental health and addiction services, planning and advocating for regional needs at the state level, increasing awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues, providing education to the community through local events and resources, and connecting people in the local community to services and supports.

The RMHBs achieve these numerous, critical aims at a grassroots level, bringing various stakeholders to the table, including consumers, providers and local citizens within the community. They do all of this with very little funding. Only slightly more than \$100,000 is invested in each Regional Board per year, which more than pays for itself given the approximately \$23 million in federal funding that the Regional Boards along with the Regional Action Councils help to bring in to the state. The proposed cut of \$584,000 would force the RMHB system to shut down, and would deprive our communities of the indispensable services that these organizations provide and would effectively silence the voice of the local community within the larger state mental health dialogue.

For the reasons noted above, I hope that you will reconsider the current budget and the impacts that it would have on our state mental health services and the RMHB system that was established 40 years ago to ensure the appropriate and effective delivery of those services. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erika McCarthy  
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